

## FAIR ELECTIONS POLICY 101

A handful of bills have been introduced by legislators in Albany that would tackle reforming the campaign finance system, including Speaker Silver's Campaign Finance Reform Action, A4980. The Fair Elections for New York Campaign has not "endorsed" one bill as the bill that our campaign is fully behind. But pulling from the various bills, plus the Governor's plan proposed in the 2013 State of the State can be combined to create legislation well worth passing. This legislation must include:

### Public financing of elections for all state-level races, Assembly and Senate

- All public financing systems are voluntary options for candidates.
- Candidates must first qualify for the program, by proving they have broad community support. They must qualify for the ballot, and also be able to collect a certain number of small donations (small donations are those less than \$250).
- Once qualified, candidates would receive \$6 in public funds for every \$1 in private money collected from small donors. Small donations can come from any resident of New York State. This means, your \$10 donation to a candidate is actually worth \$70! Or your \$25 donation is worth \$175!
- Participating candidates would not be subject to spending limits – they could spend whatever is necessary in a competitive election. But, the total amount of public funds available for each candidate would be capped at a reasonable limit.
- Participating candidates would be required to appear in public debates and a Voter Guide.
- Participants in the system should have a much lower contribution limit (\$2000 in A4980), but only the small donations, under \$250 would be matched with public funds.

### Enforcement and administration

- Create a new, truly independent oversight and enforcement body with responsibility for public financing and all campaign finance law administration, including helping candidates comply and proposing improvements to the system.
- Ensure that the Attorney General and local district attorneys can independently of the State Board of Elections investigate and prosecute alleged violations of the Election Law.
- Substantially increase fines for exceeding contribution limits and violating campaign finance disclosure laws.

### Reasonable contribution limits

- Current contribution limits in New York state are the highest of any state with limits, and well over the \$2600 any one person can give to a presidential candidate:
  - Statewide candidates can take up to \$60,800 in an election cycle from just one person.
  - Senate candidates: \$16,800
  - Assembly candidates: \$8,200
- We need to dramatically lower all of these limits. New York's limits should be near or the same as the amount that can be given to Presidential or Congressional candidates: \$2600 (in 2013/14).

### Robust disclosure of money in politics

New Yorkers have a right to know who is giving to candidates and groups that are spending money on campaigns. We need laws that will increase the number of times candidates and groups have to report their donations, more information on who gave the donation and more information about how money is being spent by candidates and groups.